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NEWS
FROM YOUR MUSEUM
THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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BLUEBIRDS IN MARCH

No sign of spring's return could be more thrilling than a glimpse of the first bluebird. It is not hard, then, to think of these birds as symbols of happiness. Radiant blue and chestnut red, and with a song sweet and low, they are altogether attractive. They have been seen in March year after year by observers of the Royal Ontario Museum and scores of bird watchers elsewhere. On rural and suburban roadways a careful scrutiny of trees, telephone poles and wires usually bings one or more of them in view. Not only bluebirds, but horned larks, the vanguard of the robin invasion, song sparrows, purple finches, and other harbingers of spring are not uncommon thrills encountered in March; especially the latter half of the month. That Ontario folk in increasing numbers are allured by the fascinating hobby of bird watching, is noted at the Royal Ontario Museum where a constantly growing interest in the vast collection of Canadian and foreign birds is evidenced.

ANNUAL EXHIBITION OF CANADIAN PRINTS

The annual exhibition of the Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers and Engravers, now on view in the Japanese Print Gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology, will remain until March 31st. Etchings, aquatints, woodcuts, and lithographs are among the prints displayed, many of which are by well-known Canadian artists in this field of art.

THE ROMANCE OF TEA

Tea, next to water, has become the world's principal, as well as its cheapest beverage, and the story of this commodity is a romantic one. According to Chinese legend, the virtues of tea were discovered by the Emperor Chinnung in 2737 B.C. One day while boiling his drinking water, a few leaves from the branches that were crackling beneath the pot fell into the water, imparting to it a delicate and exquisite aroma. Investigation revealed that the branches were those of the wild tea plant. It is an established fact that the habit of tea-drinking first evolved among the Chinese, and from China a knowledge of tea was carried into Japan. Strangely enough, although many of China's products were known and used in Europe much earlier, no reference to tea has yet been traced in European literature prior to 1588. Early in the 17th century Dutch adventurers, on their return from the East, introduced tea-drinking into Europe but not till the middle of that century did the English begin to use tea, and for many years it was a luxury possible only for the wealthy. As its use increased the British experimented with tea cultivation in India, using seed brought from China, but the discovery by Major Robert Bruce in 1823 of tea plants growing wild in Assam really marks the birth of the Indian tea industry. In January of 1839 a first consignment of eight chests of tea from India was auctioned in London, selling at prices ranging from sixteen to thirty-four shillings a pound. The tea industry in India developed and spread to other districts in the northeast and in the South of India so that to-day India has more than 800,000 acres under tea, with an anual production of over 550,000,000 pounds. And here is where romance enters. Early in the 19th century the "China Clipper," a type of vessel specially designed for the rapid carrying of tea from China to England via the Cape of Good Hope was introduced. Competition was keen as to which ship should make the most rapid passage. The most celebrated of all tea races, and one of the last, was that of 1866 when three of nine ships that sailed from Foochow almost simultaneously, made the long voyage of 16,000 miles in ninety-one days, all docking in London on the same day, within two hours of each other. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 soon changed the course of all trade with the East, and in a few years this method of transporting tea round the Cape of Good Hope was a thing of the past. Romance was no more. The emigrants from the British Isles who peopled the Dominions took their taste for tea with them and it flourished as strongly across the ocean as it did at home. In Canada, tea was included in the early shipments, in the 18th century, made by the Hudson's Bay Company to their forts and posts. Tea became, as it remained, the favourite beverage in Canadian homes, as well as the standby of the trappers and hunters in the Far North, from whom the Eskimos derived a taste for tea which makes them amongst the world's greatest tea-drinkers. Among relevant objects in the collections of the Royal Ontario Musum of Archaeology are hundreds of teapots and caddies, many teacups, Russian pressed tea slabs and a brick of Tibetan tea.

ANTIQUITY OF CANCER

An article written by a Toronto x-ray worker on the results of x-ray investigation of dinosaur bones from mounted specimens at the Royal Ontario Museum of Palaeontology, was sent to the British Museum of Natural History, London. It dealt with an attempt to discover evidence of cancer in pre-historic animals represented in the Toronto collection. Acknowledging the article, W. E. Swinton of the British institution mentioned one dinosaur bone he has examined which "strongly suggests" cancer. He writes: "A dinosaur bone from the Danian (Upper Cretaceous) of Transylvania, in the Geological department of the British Museum, shows a periosteal (periosteum is the fine, elastic-like covering of the bones) condition of some interest. This has been sectioned and thoroughly investigated. In the absence of soft parts, however, diagnosis is unsatisfactory; but the affected area strongly suggests a periosteal sarcoma." Sarcoma is the name of a certain type of cancer.

COMING EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM

March 5—Nicol Smith presents his new all-color film "VALLEY IN
8.30 p.m. THE CLOUDS," thrilling story of Jammu and Kashmir.

April 8—Robert Friers presents color travelogue "MEXICAN
8.30 p.m. "HOLIDAY."

April 9—Robert Friers presents color travelogue "HOLIDAY
and 10 IN CUBA."